



International Women of Courage Award winner for Europe, Valdete Idrizi with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, March 10, 2008

European Winner of “International Women of Courage Award” meets Secretary Rice, March 10, 2008

Along with the other five regional winners, and the winners from Iraq and Afghanistan, Valdete Idrizi from the newest country in the world, Kosovo, proudly accepted her award from Secretary of State Rice on March 10. Valdete, an ethnic Albanian, born and raised in Kosovo’s Serb majority area of North Mitrovica, has been working on peace-building efforts between Albanians and Serbs since the end of the Kosovo Conflict in 1999. Although she lost her father and brother, as well as her home, in the war, and was displaced to the South, she has dedicated her life to the recognition that both sides suffered terrible losses, and going forward and forgiving is the only way to survive. Courageously, Valdete began by reaching out to Serb and ethnic Albanian widows directly after the war when bitterness was very fresh – and has organized over 200 programs since then that have addressed all aspects of inter-ethnic conflict. Among her favorites includes trying to change the outlook of youth, through role-play and theater. Although death and other threats have been common in the past 9 years, she has continued to work with the NGO she founded, “Community Building Mitrovica.” Sadly independence has hardened some of the attitudes, her Serb colleagues have continued to work with her from the North side of the Ibar Bridge, while she is on the South – both ethnicities trying to effect one nation in peace.

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